



**“DOG DAYS” CAME EARLY THIS YEAR,
AND THAT’S HARD ON PETS**

**Release: 6/24/05
Contact: Donna Gilson
608-224-5130**

MADISON — So far, summer 2005 is shaping up to be a wicked one, and that means pet owners need to protect their furry pals.

“Dogs and cats don’t perspire, they pant, and panting isn’t very effective in extreme hot weather,” says state humane officer Dr. Yvonne Bellay of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. “They can’t provide their own ventilation or water. They can’t get out of a hot car or airless room. It’s all up to people.”

Heat stroke is a very real threat to animals, and can be fatal even with prompt treatment. Pets that have already suffered heat stroke once are more susceptible, as are animals that are very young or very old, have health problems, are overweight, or are snub-nosed.

Signs of heat stroke include panting, staring or stupor, breathing difficulty, an anxious expression, refusal to obey, warm dry skin, fever, rapid heartbeat, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, and collapse.

“If you see any of these signs in hot weather or if your pet’s been left in a vehicle, call your veterinarian immediately,” Bellay says. “In the meantime, get the animal out of direct heat and get it wet however you can – with towels soaked in cool water, with a hose, in a wading pool. If you use towels, it will be most effective on less hairy parts of the body, like a dog’s belly and legs.”

Even if the animal seems to revive after a few minutes, get it to a veterinarian, because its temperature may rise again or fall well below normal, she adds.

“As always, prevention is the best medicine,” Bellay says, and offers these tips for pet owners:

- Never leave an animal in a parked vehicle, even for a few minutes. The temperature in a parked car may hit 120 degrees within minutes, so just a 10-minute stop may be dangerous. Opening the windows a few inches doesn’t provide enough cooling. If you’re running errands, leave your dog home – in a cool basement, or in a shaded yard with a wading pool. If you’re traveling, make your pit stops at places where your pet can get out of the vehicle.
- Provide fresh, cool drinking water at all times – including in your vehicle when you’re traveling.
- Outdoor kennels must be well-ventilated and shaded, with water in bowls that will not tip.
- Don’t exercise pets on hot days or warm, humid nights.
- Groom your pet. Clip long coats to about an inch -- shorter clips or shaving can leave dogs vulnerable to sunburn. Brush cats daily in hot weather, when they shed profusely, to help keep them comfortable by preventing hairballs. Good grooming can prevent summer skin problems, too.

“I can’t emphasize enough the importance of never, ever leaving your dog in a vehicle in the sun. Even if the outside temperature is mild rather than hot, the sun shining in through glass and beating on metal turns that vehicle into a death trap for animals,” Bellay says.